

DRAFT

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan

FY 2016-2025



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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Columbia Bottom Conservation Area, # 9736
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1997
- **Acreage:** 4,318 acres
- **County:** St. Louis
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statements of Primary Purpose:**

A. Strategic Direction

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area (CA) is managed to enhance and restore its large river ecosystem and associated mosaic of bottomlands habitats; while providing high quality, compatible public recreational activities and public educational and interpretive opportunities.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition of Columbia Bottom CA is a mosaic of bottomland habitats, including shallow wetlands, bottomland forests, prairie and cropland that provide habitat for a variety of resident and migratory wildlife.

C. Federal Aid Statement

Federal funds (Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration) were used in the development of this area, or a portion thereof. The Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) must maintain the developed project throughout its useful life. Federal funds may also be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

- A. **Priority Areas:** Confluence Terrestrial Conservation Opportunity Area, Audubon Missouri Important Bird Area
- B. **Natural Areas:** None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

- A. **Species of Conservation Concern:** Species of Conservation Concern are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.
- B. **Caves:** None
- C. **Springs:** None

D. Other: Occurs in the West Alton Alluvial Plain Landtype Association within the Missouri River Alluvial Plain. This small but distinctive landtype association is an alluvial plain at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers that receives frequent floodwaters and alluvium from both rivers, but mainly from the Missouri River. Soils are recent and immature. Historically the landtype association consisted of bottomland prairie and wetland complexes. Today it is in row crops and a major restored wetland complex with very limited residential and commercial development due to the frequent flooding. Columbia Bottom CA and Edward “Ted” and Pat Jones-Confluence Point State Park sit on opposite banks of the mouth of the Missouri River. (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 24 parking areas, 13 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible
- 1 concrete boat ramp (ADA accessible)
- Howard and Joyce Wood Education and Visitor Center
 - Open classroom area
 - Clerical area
 - Restroom facilities
 - Staff office space
- 9 exploration stations
- Viewing platform (ADA accessible)
- Confluence observation platform (ADA accessible)
- Viewing blind (ADA accessible)
- 3 waterfowl hunting blinds (ADA accessible)
- 4 privies (ADA accessible)
- 3 pavillions (ADA accessible)
- Slough boardwalk (ADA accessible)
- Fishing pier/platform (ADA accessible)
- Canoe/kayak access area
- 13 water control structures
- River pump station with two electric pumps
- Maintenance compound area with shop building, fuel and chemical storage buildings
- Trails
 - 4.8-mile Confluence Trail (hike/bike)
 - 2.75 mile River’s Edge Trail (hike)
 - 7.8-mile Madison Ferry Trail (hike/bike/horse)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations: The City of St. Louis retained the rights to the groundwater and any such easements needed to gain access to

that water, and the right to share a percentage of any revenues the Department may generate from nontraditional income or from the sale of mitigation bank credits. This agreement does not include income from the Agricultural Crop program.

- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds (Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration) were used in the development of this area, or a portion thereof. The Department must maintain the developed project throughout its useful life. Federal funds may also be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** In addition to easements granted to the City of St. Louis in relation to their water rights, a number of easements are listed in the title insurance policy. This policy lists easements for the following individuals, companies or agencies: St. Louis County, Union Electric Light and Power Company (now Ameren UE), a private road to an adjoining property, Yarhola pipeline company, Ozark pipeline corporation, Shell (now Equilon) pipeline corporation (operated by Buckeye Partners LP.), Laclede pipeline company, the United States of America and Mississippi River Transmission Corporation. Many of these easements are very old and exact locations are unknown. Several are not actively being used. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers acquired U. S. Fish and Wildlife Mitigation easements on the property in 2002 and 2003 to facilitate their ability to perform habitat enhancement work on the area. In 2011, the Corps of Engineers requested an easement to establish a Water Trail Informational Kiosk. In 2014, the Corps of Engineers requested this Kiosk easement to be converted to a license agreement.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records kept with the Department Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.
- E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** None observed.
- F. Endangered Species:** Endangered species are known from this area. Area Manager should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.
- G. Boundary Issues:** None

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage forest community.

- 2) Maintain reforestation areas.
- 3) Maintain landscape plantings around parking lots and other facilities.
- 4) Ensure that structures, roads, trails, parking lots, etc. are free from hazardous trees.
- 5) Manage bottomland prairie habitat.
- 6) Utilize permittee farming as a technique to maintain open land, control problem weeds and provide wildlife food sources.
- 7) Convert a portion of the agriculture production acres to small game friendly habitat.

Management Objective 1: Maintain healthy trees and forest with management emphasis on wildlife habitat.

Strategy 1: Monitor forest for invasive vegetation. Assess feasibility of treatment and develop plan for control, as needed (Wildlife/Forestry).

Strategy 2: Retain and protect existing den trees (Wildlife/Forestry).

Management Objective 2: Maintain reforestation areas.

Strategy 1: Monitor the reforestation areas for invasive species. Assess feasibility of treatment and develop possible plan for control (Wildlife/Forestry).

Strategy 2: Evaluate and perform forest stand improvement, as needed, on reforestation areas to promote planted hardwood trees (Wildlife/Forestry).

Management Objective 3: Maintain landscape plantings around parking lots and other facilities.

Strategy 1: Monitor trees for health issues (Wildlife/Forestry).

Strategy 2: Trim and mulch around trees as needed (Wildlife).

Management Objective 4: Ensure that structures, roads, trails, parking lots, etc. are free from hazardous trees.

Strategy 1: Trees should be inspected for hazard conditions by trained area staff or with assistance of regional Forestry staff (Wildlife/Forestry).

Strategy 2: Trees and limbs identified as hazardous should be removed or pruned as soon as possible in accordance with the *Guidelines for Avoiding and Minimizing Impacts to Federally-Listed Bats on Missouri Department of Conservation Lands* (Wildlife/Forestry).

Management Objective 5: Manage bottomland grasslands.

Strategy 1: Manage grassland units with a combination of techniques, including, but not limited to, prescribed fire, mowing and selective herbicides to maintain a diverse plant community (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Monitor plant diversity in each prairie and flooding effects on them. Supplemental plantings may be used if plant diversity is below desired level (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Control invasive plants and trees in grassland plantings (Wildlife).

Management Objective 6: Utilize permittee farming as a technique to maintain open land, control problem plants and provide wildlife food sources.

Strategy 1: Design annual crop plans to maintain open areas. Address areas with invasive plant problems and provide food sources for wildlife (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Utilize bartered services with permittee farmers to help address other area management goals (Wildlife).

Management Objective 7: Convert areas to small game habitats.

Strategy 1: Establish small game habitat on 300-500 acres of converted agriculture production ground. Evaluate field elevations and soil conditions to help determine what plant species will do best and plant accordingly (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Monitor plant and animal response to this habitat conversion (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Control invasive plants and trees in small game habitats (Wildlife).

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage for early successional herbaceous plant communities in seasonal wetlands.
- 2) Manage at least one wetland pool annually to create habitat for migrating shorebirds.
- 3) Manage wetland pools annually to create habitat for migrating waterfowl during fall and spring migrations.
- 4) Coordinate with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on any projects, on or near the area that may affect management of the area.
- 5) Investigate the feasibility of reconnecting the main slough area outside the river levee with the river to provide additional fisheries habitat.

Management Objective 1: Manage for early successional herbaceous plant communities in seasonal wetlands.

Strategy 1: Utilize a combination of moist soil management techniques to maintain an open, early successional plant community dominated by native wetland plants (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Periodically use row cropping in wetland pools as a soil disturbance technique and as a means of providing high energy foods for migratory waterfowl and escape cover (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Carefully monitor water levels and manipulate water control structures and pumps to manage water levels efficiently (Wildlife).

Strategy 4: Control invasive plants and trees in wetlands (Wildlife).

Management Objective 2: Manage at least one wetland pool annually to create habitat for migrating shorebirds.

Strategy 1: Annually ensure mud flats and shallow water habitats are available for migrating shorebirds in both spring (March) and fall (August) migratory periods (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Consider public viewing opportunities when selecting pools for shorebird management (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Utilize selective mowing and disking to create invertebrate substrate and open vistas (Wildlife).

Management Objective 3: Manage wetland pools annually to create habitat for migrating waterfowl during fall and spring migrations.

Strategy 1: Monitor water levels and manipulate water control structures and pumps to manage water levels efficiently (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Annually evaluate vegetation in wetland pools and manage for early successional wetland plant communities (Wildlife).

Management Objective 4: Coordinate with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on projects, on or near the area that may affect management of the area.

Strategy 1: Keep apprised of U. S. Army Corps of Engineers projects in-river next to the area (Wildlife/Fisheries).

Strategy 2: Communicate with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on potential projects on the area that fall under the Missouri River Recovery Program (Wildlife).

Management Objective 5: Investigate the feasibility of reconnecting the slough outside the levee with the river.

Strategy 1: Explore ways to increase river-slough connectivity for improved seasonal fish habitat (Wildlife/Fisheries).

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide for hunting, fishing and viewing opportunities.
- 2) Manage area to minimize trash and property destruction.
- 3) Provide educational and interpretive opportunities.
- 4) Enforce area regulations.
- 5) Reevaluate the Visitor Center days/hours of operation.

Management Objective 1: Provide public hunting, fishing and viewing opportunities.

Strategy 1: Conduct annual management activities that will provide habitat for a variety of species (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Seasonally flood wetland pools to provide waterfowl hunting opportunities (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Monitor deer population levels and use this information to allow for managed deer hunts on the area to regulate deer numbers (Wildlife).

Strategy 4: Provide high quality dove hunting opportunities by providing a managed dove hunt program for the first portion of the dove season (Wildlife).

Strategy 5: Provide youth hunting opportunities for dove, turkey, waterfowl and deer. Work with Outreach and Education staff to provide an educational clinic and hunting event for each of these hunts (Wildlife/Outreach and Education).

Management Objective 2: Provide dove hunting fields.

Strategy 1: Utilize permittee farmers or area staff to establish at least 125 acres of wheat and sunflowers annually (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Select required planting dates or proper variety of seed to ensure sunflowers mature no later than Aug. 10 annually (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Begin annual field manipulation (mowing or discing) of wheat and sunflowers by Aug. 1 and continue periodically through the month of August (Wildlife).

Strategy 4: Utilize alternative crops such as buckwheat or millets, where appropriate, to provide an alternative food source for doves (Wildlife).

Management Objective 3: Maintain and enforce area regulations. Work to minimize area property destruction and littering.

Strategy 1: Patrol area on a regular basis (Wildlife/Protection).

Strategy 2: Encourage assistance from local law enforcement agencies by maintaining security contract with St. Louis County Police and working with other agencies as needed (Wildlife/Protection).

Strategy 3: Protection Division will oversee enforcement efforts with area staff assisting as needed. Arrange for special patrols to curb area abuse problems (Protection).

Strategy 4: Monitor area use and evaluate the effectiveness of area regulations (Wildlife/Protection).

Strategy 5: Ensure needed regulation changes are submitted for code review (Wildlife/Protection).

Management Objective 4: Continue to provide and expand non-personal interpretive opportunities for individuals and groups.

Strategy 1: Maintain current man-made and natural structures, which include, but are not limited to, the Exploration Stations, overlook platforms at the Cropland Exploration Station and Confluence area, ADA facilities, trail system, etc. (Wildlife/Outreach and Education).

Strategy 2: Review interpretive signage and update or repair signage as necessary (Outreach and Education).

Strategy 3: Renovate Visitor Center exhibits to reflect current management of area resources and to support the Discover Nature curriculum (Outreach and Education).

Management Objective 5: Continue to provide and expand personal interpretive and educational opportunities.

Strategy 1: Provide comprehensive educational and interpretive opportunities that promote the Discover Nature curriculum and outdoor skills (Outreach and Education).

Strategy 2: Continue to provide programming on-site and off-site for organized groups and the general public (Outreach and Education).

Strategy 3: Solicit area teachers via Conservation Education Consultants to bring their students out for Discover Nature field trips (Outreach and Education).

Strategy 4: Present one public special event per year. Evaluate the potential to add an associated special school event (Outreach and Education).

Management Objective 6: Re-evaluate the Visitor Center days/hours of operation.

Strategy 1: Monitor public use of the Visitor Center by maintaining a record of phone calls received and visitors who enter the Visitor Center (Wildlife/Outreach and Education).

Strategy 2: Analyze the record of phone calls received and visitors to determine if a change in days of operation should be recommended (Wildlife/Outreach and Education).

Strategy 3: Make recommendations to administration to best meet staff and visitor needs (Wildlife/Outreach and Education).

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.
- 2) Repair flood damage on main area road.
- 3) Maintain flood protection levee.
- 4) Maintain relationships with neighbors.
- 5) Provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with an annual management plan on habitat enhancement projects.
- 6) Acquisition of land.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure at current levels.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with Department guidelines (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Work with Department construction crews to develop and implement a plan to repair/replace damaged asphalt roads (Wildlife/Design and Development).

Management Objective 2: Maintain the flood protection levee.

Strategy 1: Maintain flood protection levee to U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' standards (Wildlife/Design and Development).

Management Objective 3: Facilitate a good working relationship with neighboring land owners.

Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize any boundary, trespass or other issues (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Work to keep neighbors informed of major activities or changes on the area (Wildlife/Outreach and Education).

Management Objective 4: Provide the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers with an annual management plan for habitat enhancement projects.

Strategy 1: Work with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop and implement an annual habitat management plan. (Wildlife).

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other

Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered (Wildlife).

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Terrestrial Resource Management										
<i>Objective 6</i>										
Strategy 1	X					X				
<i>Objective 8</i>										
Strategy 1	X	X	X	X	X					
Strategy 2	X	X	X	X	X					
Aquatic Resource Management										
<i>Objective 5</i>										
Strategy 1			X							
Public Use Management										
<i>Objective 4</i>										
Strategy 3	X					X				
<i>Objective 5</i>										
Strategy 4		X								
<i>Objective 6</i>										
Strategy 2	X									
Strategy 3	X									
Administrative Consideration										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 2	X	X	X							

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Columbia Bottom CA is located at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers in the north St. Louis County community known as Spanish Lake. The Department purchased this 4,318-acre area in 1997 to create an urban conservation area. The area includes a view of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, more than 6.5 miles of river frontage, about 900 acres of bottomland forest and a 110-acre island.

A flood protection levee protects most of this bottom from minor floods. The Great Flood of 1993 overtopped this levee and flooded most of the area, depositing sand and debris. The area is still prone to occasional flooding as experienced in 2002, 2008 and 2013.

The Department is managing Columbia Bottom CA to create a mosaic of bottomland habitats that includes shallow wetlands, bottomland hardwoods, grassland and cropland. These habitats attract a wide variety of resident and migratory wildlife for the enjoyment of Missouri's residents and visitors.

The Howard and Joyce Wood Education and Visitor Center is located near the entrance to the area. Normal operating hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Friday; and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. The Visitor Center is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and official state holidays. The area is open from a half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset daily, except for authorized hunting and fishing activities and launching and landing boats.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Cropland	1,500		34
Wetlands	900		21
Forest	800		19
Reforestation	500		12
Grassland	400		9
Infrastructure	118		3
Old Field	100		2
Total	4,318		100
River Frontage - Missouri River		3.7	
River Frontage- Mississippi River		2.8	

Public Input Summary:

Prior to writing this draft area management plan, the Department conducted a public input process (the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage) from Jan. 15 – Feb. 15, 2015. The objectives of this phase were to inform key stakeholders that the Department is drafting an area management plan, to identify initial issues and concerns from stakeholders and to determine how best to reach out to stakeholders and the public during the upcoming public comment period. The Department sent emails to 32 organizations and neighbors and received comments back from nine respondents (see Appendix B).

The area planning team took comments into consideration as they drafted this 10-year management plan. A brief summary of public input themes can be found in Appendix A.

References:

Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W.A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Current Vegetative Map

Figure 5: Easement Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Department Responses to Public Comments – Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage

Appendix B: Comments Received During Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage

Figure 1: Area Map

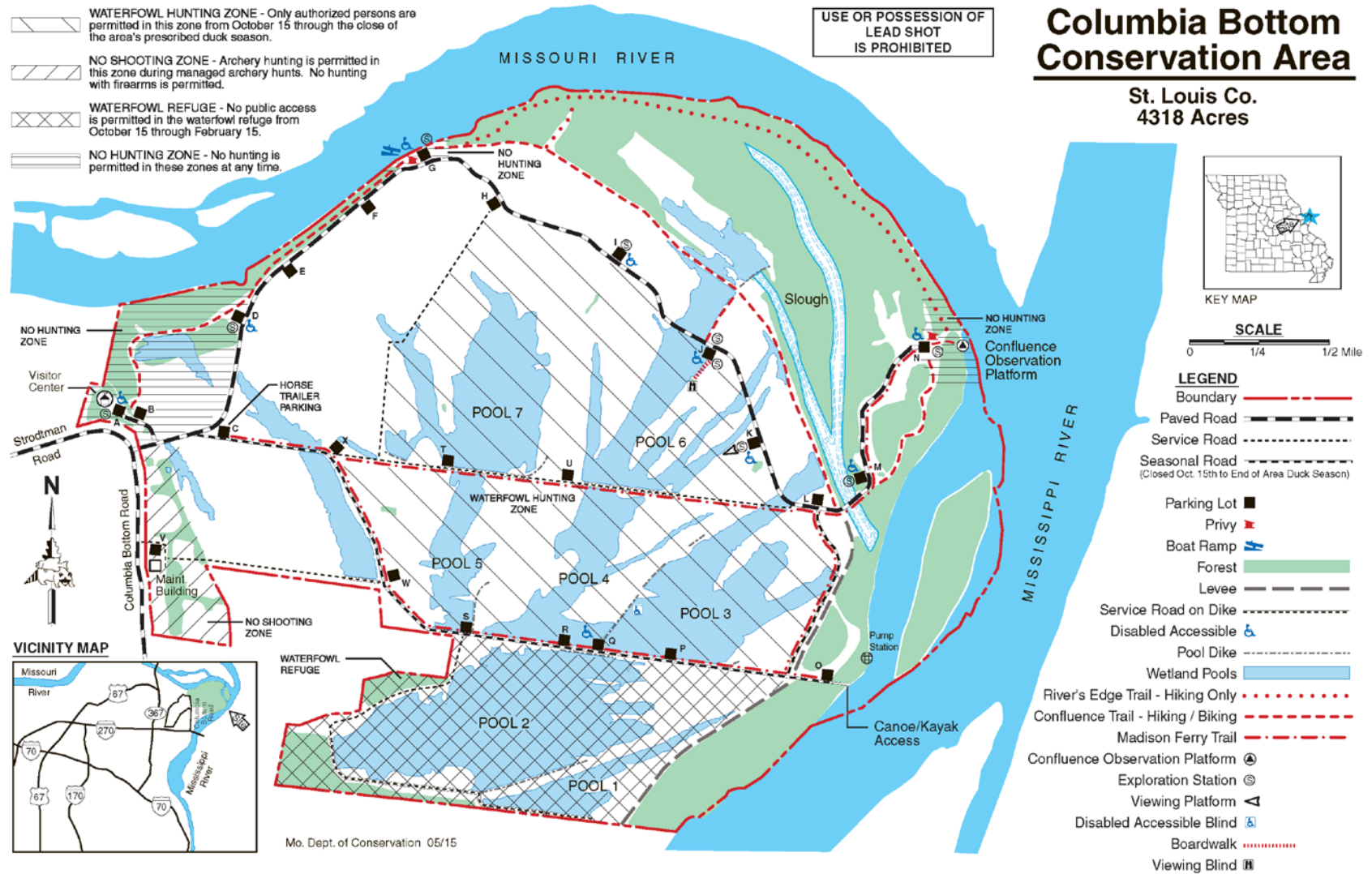


Figure 2: Aerial Map

Columbia Bottom CA
Aerial View



Figure 3: Topographic Map

Columbia Bottom CA
Topographical View

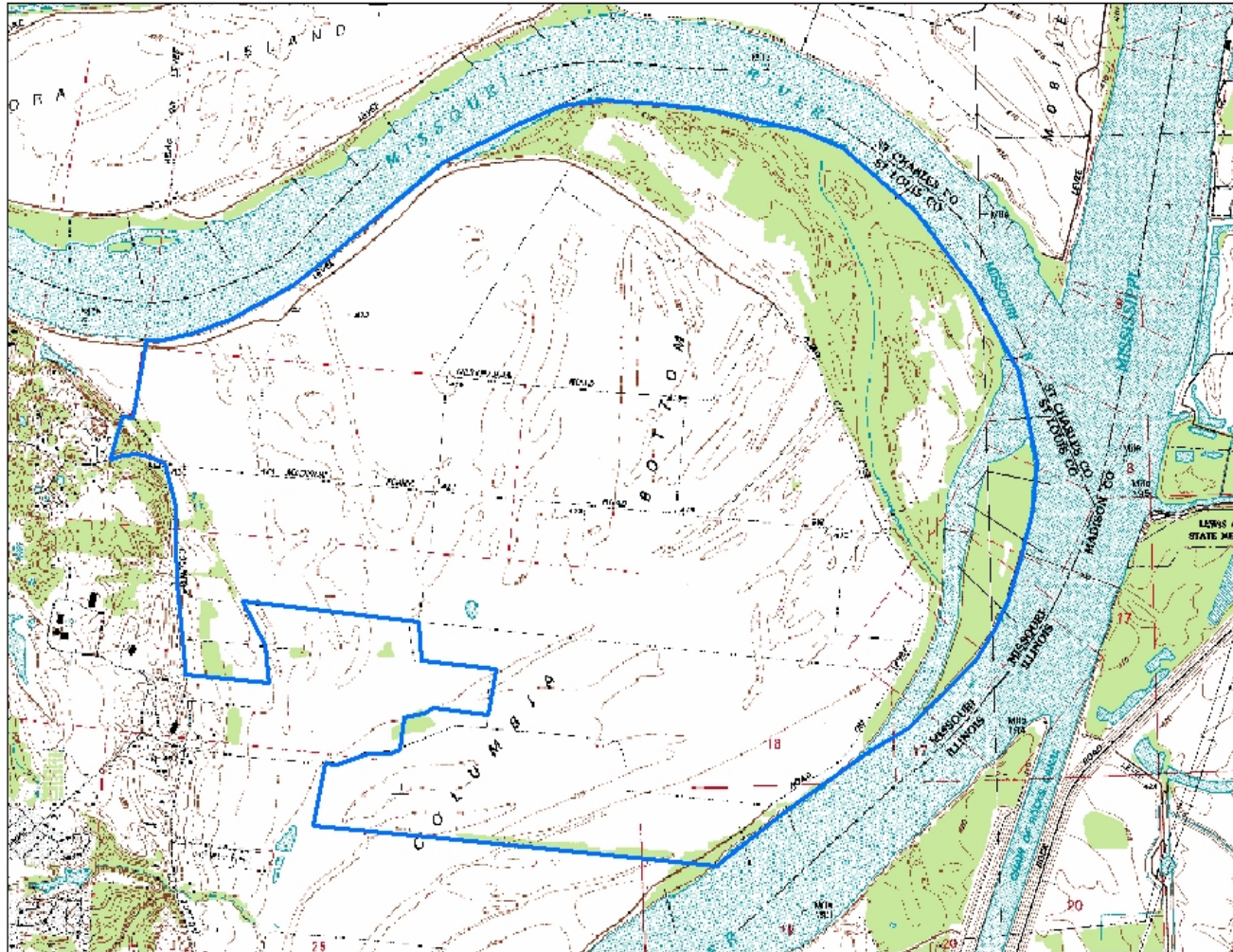


Figure 4: Current Vegetative Map

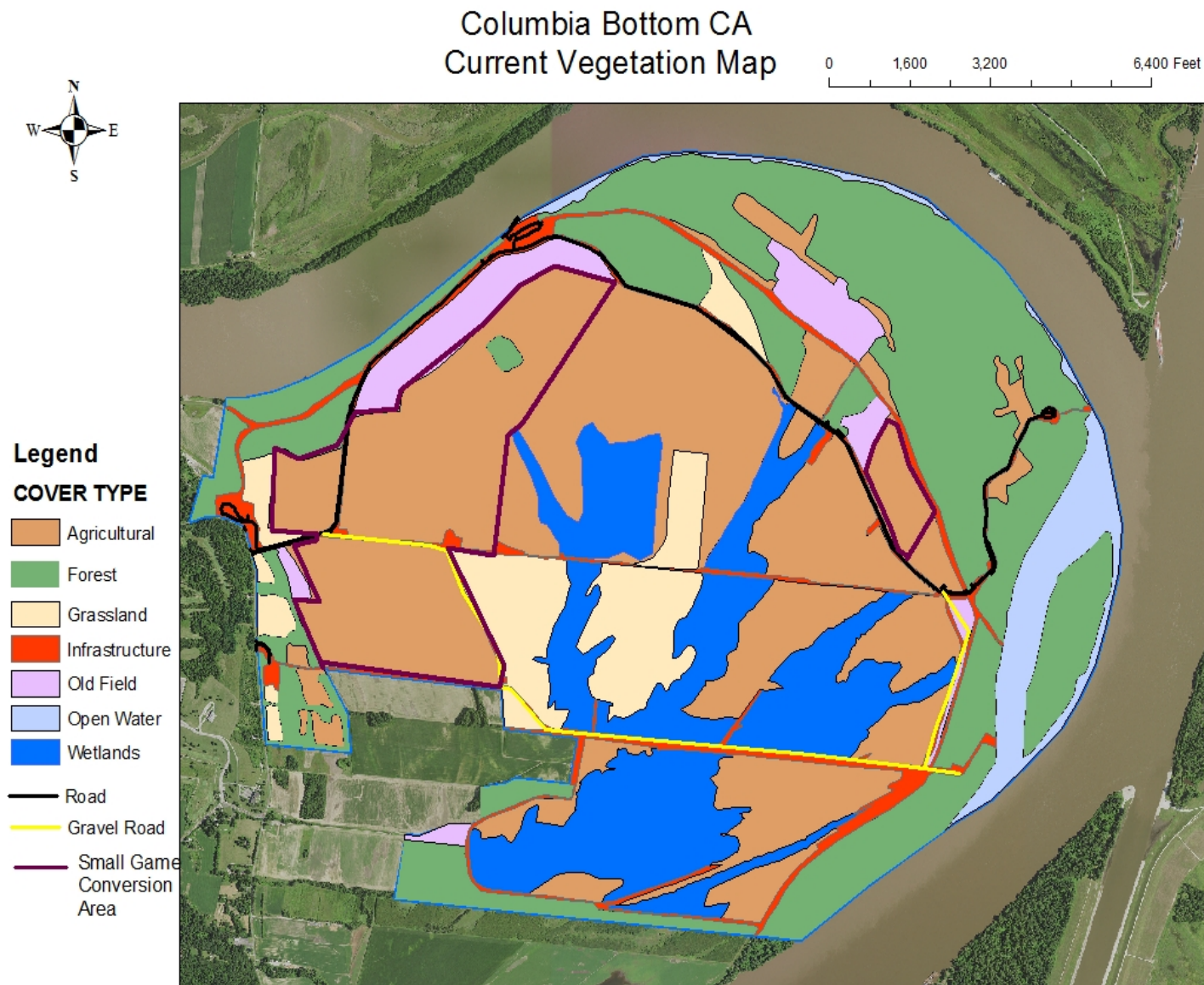
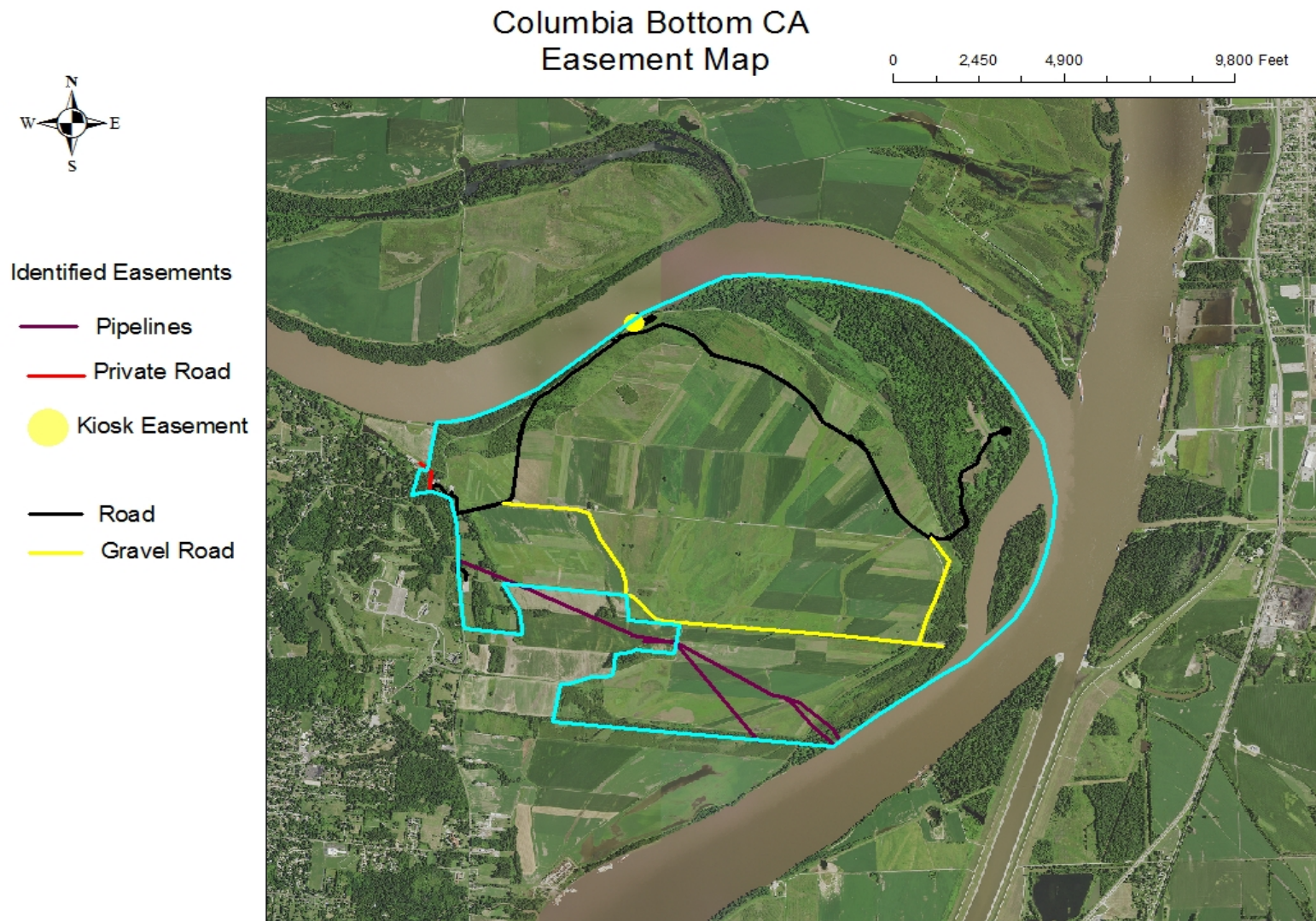


Figure 5: Easement Map



Appendix A: Department Responses to Public Comments – Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage

Background:

Prior to writing the draft Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Management Plan, the Department conducted an informal idea gathering phase Jan. 15 – Feb. 15, 2015, as described on Page 13. Altogether, nine comments were received. The area management planning team took comments into consideration as they drafted the area management plan. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they will be incorporated or why they will not be included, can be found below. Comments were grouped into general themes and addressed collectively.

Terrestrial Resource Management

Concern that wetland pools and refuge were drained too quickly (dry in January 2015).

Pumps were shut off due to frozen conditions; and, with low river levels, water seeped into the ground from wetland pools. When warmer weather returned, pumps were started to replace water in some of the wetland pools.

Concern that Pool 8 is no longer a pool, but has been plowed and planted.

Pool 8 was always considered an opportunistic pool and there is no way to put water into the pool except by rain or flood events. After every rain event, water soaks into the soil quickly. The Pool 8 area is being converted to small game friendly habitat.

Suggests increased focus on management for the purpose of attracting, protecting and nurturing wild birds.

Suggestion is included in plan.

Suggests fewer acres of row crops and more acres focused on natural community management (marshes, bottomland prairies, forests).

There is an ongoing project to reduce large grain crop on the area. A portion of the area is being converted to small game friendly habitat over the next several years. Row cropping does provide additional food resources and cover for wildlife and is used to control invasive plants. A certain amount of row cropping will remain on the area into the future.

Suggests maximizing wetland development on the area (including adequate refuge and food for waterfowl).

With the current pump/water distribution infrastructure, 850 acres is the maximum surface area that can be managed for wetlands.

Suggests incorporating some of the habitat objectives developed by the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Joint Venture into this area management plan.

This is being done as wetlands are being developed using moist soil plant communities and providing habitat for fall and spring migrating waterfowl.

Aquatic Resource Management

Opposes any management changes that would jeopardize water rights belonging to City of St. Louis.

Comment has been noted. Water rights belonging to the City of St. Louis must be considered due to easements on area.

Public Use Management

Trails

Disappointed that sections of asphalt trails were not replaced after flooding. Suggests restoring bicycle trail and access roads damaged by flooding.

Future flood damage to infrastructure is being considered before restoring trails and roads. Future plans call for the road to be relocated away from the flood protection levee and restored to an asphalt surface. Trail will be restored to a gravel surface.

Roads

Suggests creating bicycle lane on area roads.

This suggestion is under consideration for the relocated portion of road.

Appreciates how often flood-damaged roads and facilities are quickly repaired.

Thank you.

Concern that flood-damaged roads and infrastructure are not repaired quickly enough. Suggests developing contingency plan and setting aside funding for flood damage repairs. The Department has to look at all damaged areas across the state and deal with each of them, as needs are identified and prioritized, with available funds and equipment.

Hunting

Suggests allowing hunting of upland game, if compatible with migratory bird hunting.

This suggestion is being considered. Squirrel hunting is now allowed from Jan. 1-Feb. 15 and opening day in May until Aug. 31.

Concern that too much focus is placed on hunting and fishing.

Less than 30 percent of area visitors are on the area to hunt or fish. Most are here for other reasons.

Illegal Dumping

Concern with illegal dumping in southern portion of area. Suggests addressing ways to deal with this problem.

Staff makes regular checks and cleanups on area.

Administrative Considerations

Suggests placing security cameras at parking lots to deter car break-ins.

There is a contract with St. Louis County police for security on the area.

Concerned that there is not an organized levee district in area.

Suggestion is in plan to investigate this issue.

Appendix B: Comments Received During Columbia Bottom Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage

Received during idea gathering phase (Jan. 15 – Feb. 15, 2015):

I'm responding as a local resident and user of the area. Our family didn't use CBCA as much this past year because of the flooding and areas being closed. As a family we would ride the levee trail pretty frequently. We were disappointed that sections of the asphalt trail were not replaced, even previous to 2014, but I realize what you are up against in a river bottomland area. We have experienced similar problems in several of our parks along the Meramec and the Missouri River area – Creve Coeur Park with trail maintenance in a flood plain. In the evening hours it was not uncommon for bicyclists to use the road system to ride their bikes on because it was in a much better condition with little traffic. Would you consider adding a wider asphalt shoulder and striping it for bicyclists?

Overall, we really like the area and enjoy using it. The staff at the Nature Center are always friendly and helpful.

I have only duck hunted once Columbia bottoms, and have dove hunted a few times. Along with an occasional snipe foray. During the offseason I often hike the area around the middle pools and refuge area. In past years I have had a chance to observe the waterfowl heading back north after the season closes and the hunting area is reopened.

I believe the current management practices accommodate the widest variety of citizen needs without negatively impacting each other. It seems to function pretty well as both a “state park” for non-hunting purposes, and as a conservation area for limited hunting opportunities. I would welcome the opportunity to hunt upland game if it is compatible with the migratory bird hunting being top hunting priority for the site.

BTW, I drove thru the area a couple of weeks ago while returning from a client call in Illinois. I was disappointed to see it was nearly waterless, and there was zero presence of waterfowl in the area. I have seen the Swans that likely had used the area in the last couple of years at the Alton pool, and the water filled area on the NorthWest Corner of the I-270 and Highway 3 intersection the last couple of weeks. Just curious as to why the pools and refuge were drained down so quickly this year.

My company is interested in using the Columbia Bottoms for programming for cycling and running events. We help promote the St. Louis Senior Olympic cycling events, the Wednesday evening time trail series and occasionally a trail run on the gravel roads and River's Edge Trail. We've very much enjoyed exposing people to the park for this programming.

For our programs- restoring the bicycle trail and access road damaged by the flood is the only enhancement we'd seek. Beyond that I'm not sure what input I can give. We realize that the park is used by hunters, fishers, paddle sports, hikers, etc... so we hope we can continue to complement those activities with our special interests.

Please let me know if you'd like me to elaborate on any of our events or provide information on our participants.

I'm cc'ing the two other promoters I work with- they might have some input from their experiences.

Thank you for inviting us to provide input into MDC's 10 year management plans.

I echo Mike's comments and would like to add that part of the Conservation Area's appeal, at least to me, is that it is a great place to experience nature unfettered.

It is a real pleasure to be allowed to produce our events at Columbia Bottom CA.
Thank you.

Please call or e-mail if I/we can contribute further to the management plan.

Mike Grant from the St. Louis Audubon Society forwarded your email of January 16 to me. I'm sure he got it from Mitch Leachman.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on MDC's upcoming 10-year management plan for CBCA.

I am an avid birder; know many folks in the St. Louis birding community; am a member of the St. Louis Audubon Society field trip leader crew; was a member of the Boards of Directors of the Audubon Society of Missouri, the St. Louis Audubon Society and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society; was a charter member of the CACHE/SPARKS project team and served as record editor and reviewer for the life of the program.

I have enjoyed CBCA since it opened to the public and have made good use of the area and its facilities, and I've appreciated how often flood-damaged roads and facilities are repaired quickly. While I also appreciate MDC's accomplishments in acquiring, developing and maintaining CBCA, and recognize that MDC's mission is to serve all Missouri's citizens, I feel that the extractive sports, primarily hunting and fishing, consume much of MDC's attention and energies, and not just at CBCA, but statewide.

I would like to see more focus on the management of CBCA for the purpose of attracting, protecting and nurturing the wild birds. Short of providing specific suggestions on how to accomplish that – by myself that would be a challenge but MDC already has the expertise and I recognize that -- allow me to give one example of the kind of thing I don't like and have seen too much of, not just at CBCA but in the general environment.

Pool 8 used to be the sort of water resource birders came to rely on and visit regularly. It was not a permanent, year-round pool, of course, but it was fairly reliable given our region's typical spring and summer rainfall. The pool would usually be wet until at least the searing heat of our hot St. Louis summers dried it up, but even in summer sometimes water would remain. The pool would attract, for example, ducks and wading birds such as herons and egrets. In July, 2011, I found an immature White Ibis in a mixed flock of waders in the pool. White Ibis is rare for the St. Louis area and my find was only the second record for CBCA, based on CACHE/SPARKS data.

Pool 8, although advertised on the area map as a "wetland pool" and a major water feature, is now a pool only on the area map. As I'm sure you're aware it was plowed and planted, a disappointment to say the least.

I know that MDC strategies include the planting of row crops to provide wildlife food and cover but, honestly, my real wish is to see CBCA managed less like a corn and soybean farm and hunting reserve and more like a true conservation area. For me personally my preference in interpreting the word "conservation" is to advance what I consider to be its essence; namely, the

concept of “preservation and protection,” not “exploitation” or “wise use.”

Thank you much for the opportunity to provide feedback on the 10-year management plan for Columbia Bottom Conservation Area! While I have not spent a great deal of time on this CA, I have spent significant time working in the Confluence Region of Missouri.

“The Confluence” has been our mantra for this general area for some time now and CB is literally at the “Confluence”. Maximizing wetland development on CB could provide an “anchor” for waterfowl use and public access in an area that desperately needs publicly owned wetlands and waterfowl hunting opportunity. The soils on CB may be somewhat problematic for holding water, but I would encourage MDC to investigate all possible options for maximizing wetland development on the area. Adequate undisturbed refuge and food should be provided to help establish waterfowl use patterns.

Confluence wetlands provide critically important habitat to over 250 species of migratory waterfowl, wading birds, and songbirds. Ducks Unlimited in 2003 established the Missouri “Confluence Focus Area” as one of DU’s high-priority Conservation Regions. The Missouri portion of the Confluence contains over 31,000 acres of privately managed agriculture and wetlands – and DU has worked with landowners in this area to protect over 8,000 acres of wetland habitat, primarily through conservation easements. Providing additional public wetlands and waterfowl hunting opportunity would greatly compliment the efforts that have taken place on private land in the Confluence area.

Other conservation oriented agencies and organizations that have partnered on the “Conservation in the Confluence” initiative include USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Land Conservancy, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Mississippi Valley Duck Hunters Association may also have an interest in management at Columbia Bottoms. If you haven’t done so already, I would also encourage that you take a look at the goals and objectives outlined by the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Joint Venture (JV) as they pertain to the Confluence Region. There are likely some habitat objectives outlined by this JV that could fit well in the scope of a 10 year management plan for CB.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide some general feedback on this and have a great day!

Thanks for the opportunity to provide input into the developing Management Plan for Columbia Bottoms Conservation Area. Founded in 1920, the Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS) is one of the oldest natural history organizations in the St. Louis region. We represent more than 260 members with interests in a variety of natural history topics, including birds, insects, plants, and conservation of natural resources. A large number of our members visit and enjoy Columbia Bottoms each year. We know that administering a Conservation Area in a major river floodplain is a challenge and appreciate your and the Department’s efforts to preserve this important property at the confluence of two of the largest rivers in the country.

In general, our membership has been impressed with current management practices at Columbia Bottoms Conservation Area. However, in our board’s discussion of the matter, a few issues were raised that we would like to mention for your consideration in formulating a new management plan.

- 1) It is a harsh reality that the property is prone to periodic flooding. When such an event

happens, the Department currently does not seem to allocate sufficient resources to repair the infrastructure in a reasonable time after the waters recede. There are portions of the area in which roads have remained eroded for extended periods and walking trails sometimes have remained closed for many months. We believe that your new plan should discuss contingencies to minimize delays in responding to such issues. The agency's administration should set aside funds annually to be applied to Conservation Areas that are unduly impacted by detrimental events.

- 2) Particularly in the southern portion of the area, there continues to be an issue with illegal dumping of tires and other refuse. This dumping degrades those portions of the area involved. When there is a large-scale flooding event the trash becomes distributed even more widely. The new area plan should address ways to deal with this chronic problem.
- 3) We are hopeful that over time more of the area will become restored to native plant communities and that fewer acres will be devoted to food crops and other temporary habitats. Although food plots and early successional wetlands may attract certain kinds of waterfowl seasonally, a more intact series of marshes, bottomland prairies, and forests seems more desirable to support populations of as diverse an array of plants and other wildlife as possible.

To whom it may concern:

Allow me to extend my gratitude on behalf of the City of St. Louis Water Division for our inclusion in this process.

The 1997 sale of property known as "Columbia Bottoms" (St. Louis City Ordinance 64052) and ensuing "land swap" agreement of 2002 (St. Louis City Ordinance 65733), afforded the City of Saint Louis a retained parcel of land of approximately 350 acres comprising a portion of the area commonly known as Columbia Bottom, as well as, certain water rights, water access rights and easements. Therefore, the City of St. Louis Water Division would be opposed to any changes to the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area that might jeopardize these rights; significantly alter the composition of the water reaching the river water intake structure; or any similar such action that might incur adverse affects to the ensuing drinking water treatment process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and/or concerns.

I received your letter and I would like to thank you for requesting my input. I enjoyed our relationship all these years.

I do have a couple of ideas and one of them is very important. I will stand on a request made several years ago and supported by several others from the immediate area. MDC has acquired a reputation for having an unsafe parking lot at the boat ramp during the summer months. You were plagued with numerous car break ins. Our suggestion was to place either permanent or temporary security cameras in plain view, to detract thieves. I use them extensively both at my home and business. My cameras have been successful and six months ago resulted in the arrest of a burglar at my business. As you know my business is three miles south of MDC on Riverview. The security that is currently being provided can only be considered part time. I understand the officer is currently working approximately 200 hours a month out of the 700

hours or more there is a month. The officer who works the security has been doing a very good job, and is well like and respected by the area residents. Yet, he is not a miracle worker, he needs a hand. I feel a camera would help and I again request you re-evaluate this This idea.

The second subject is far more important. Everyone enjoys the programs you have in place and I feel the area residents are satisfied that Columbia Bottoms MDC is being managed as well as it is. However, every year the entire Columbia Bottoms, including MDC, is at the risk of flooding. That was clearly obvious two years ago. I have been researching Levee issues and responsibilities ever since our last flood. I received counseling and recommendations from Atty. Bill Hunt P.E. Flood Rehabilitation Project Manager of the Dept. Of the Army, Corps Of Engineers (copy attached). I was informed by Mr. Hunt, that years ago MDC's Lightfield, volunteered to be Columbia Bottoms Levee Manager. Being the Manager had no official status other than being an organizer for the matters relating to the five miles of Levee. Mr. Lightfield never followed up in organizing the Levee owners. Why is this important? Mr. Hunt made it clear that we should have an Organized Levee District and the Corp. would seriously hesitate in further repairs if one was not formed. MDC and the tax payers dollars or at risk each and every year Columbia Bottoms does not have an organized Levee District. There are numerous factors that need to be discussed before a District can be formed. Number of acres of Levee owned, crops that would be affect, who pays for what, are just some of the questions for discussion.

As you are aware I have not enjoyed a good relationship with MDC and would be very suspect in any type of agreement with them. I have a bucket of empty promises and signed contracts that were never honored. However, I would attend a meeting if organized. If MDC remains to keep its head in the sand, that's ok with me. We all know, that turning our back on this serious problem is not fair to the tax payers and other Columbia Bottoms land owners and should be considered into your 10 yr. management plan to protect and mange the bottoms.

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<http://mdc.mo.gov/node/19221?ap=9736>